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E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 525 - MARCH 21, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING

PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

1. ISRAEL-LEBANON. THIS MORNING, ISRAELI ARTILLERY, NAVAL UNITS, AND JETS CONTINUED TO ATTACK TARGETS IN LEBANON, ALTHOUGH THE SCALE OF THE FIGHTING SEEMS TO HAVE DIMINISHED IN COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS MORNINGS. MOST ACTIVITY APPARENTLY IS CENTERED IN THE TYRE AREA. LAST NIGHT, ISRAELI FIGHTERS BOMBED NEAR TYRE, AND ALSO IN THE VICINITY OF SIDON, NORTH OF THE LITANI. SPORADIC ARTILLERY FIRE ALSO OCCURRED DURING THE NIGHT HOURS. MILITARY ACTIVITY MAY SLACK OFF TODAY BECAUSE OF APPARENTLY WORSENING WEATHER CONDITIONS.

2. DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN SAID LAST NIGHT THAT ISRAEL WAS PREPARED TO RESPECT A CEASEFIRE, PROVIDED THE PALESTINIANS DID LIKEWISE. HE REITERATED, HOWEVER, THAT THE IDF WOULD RESPOND IF PALESTINIAN ARTILLERY AND ROCKET

ATTACKS CONTINUED ON NORTHERN ISRAELI TOWNS. SUBSEQUENTLY, SIX PALESTINIAN ROUNDS IMPACTED THIS MORNING IN THE KIRYAT SHEMONA AREA.

3. WE BELIEVE IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE PALESTINIANS WILL HALT THEIR MILITARY HARASSMENT OF THE IDF AND NORTHERN ISRAEL. THE VOICE OF PALESTINE SAID LAST NIGHT THAT THE
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PALESTINIANS REJECTED UN SECURITY COUNCIL EFFORTS TO QUIET THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH, AND DECLARED THAT THE PALESTINIANS WOULD "CONTINUE FIGHTING." FATAH HARDLINER SALAH KHALAF EXPRESSED SIMILAR SENTIMENTS IN A STATEMENT PUBLISHED TODAY IN THE KUWAITI PRESS.

4. WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE IDF ASSERTION THAT SYRIAN AND IRAQI TROOPS HAVE MOVED SOUTH OF THE RED LINE. THE IRAQIS ARE PROBABLY PLANNING TO SEND ADDITIONAL AID, HOWEVER, TO THE PALESTINIANS, INCLUDING IRAQI VOLUNTEERS. VOLUNTEERS PROBABLY WILL BE DRAWN FROM THE PEOPLE'S MILITIA, WHICH WAS VERY ACTIVE IN THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR AND WHICH LEFT LEBANON FROM TYRE AFTER THE SYRIANS RESTORED ORDER. MORE THAN 500 IRAQIS, ALSO FROM THE MILITIA, WERE IN LEBANON IN 1976. (SECRET)

5. REACTIONS. SOME MEMBERS OF THE ISRAELI CABINET HAVE CRITICIZED THE IDF'S CONTINUING ACTIVITY IN LEBANON. THEY REPORTEDLY BELIEVE THAT AFTER BEGIN ANNOUNCED THAT THE IDF'S MISSION HAD BEEN COMPLETED, HE SHOULD HAVE ANNOUNCED THAT ISRAEL INTENDED TO THIN ITS FORCES BUT WOULD REMAIN IN SOUTHERN LEBANON UNTIL A SOLUTION WAS

FOUND THAT WOULD PREVENT THE "TERRORISTS" FROM RETURNING TO THE REGION. NOR IS THE CABINET ENTHUSIASTIC OVER THE SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION CALLING FOR A UN FORCE. THIS FORCE, IN ISRAEL'S VIEW, CANNOT SOLVE THE TERRORIST PROBLEM IN SOUTHERN LEBANON.

6. ACCORDING TO EMBASSY TEL AVIV, THE ISRAELI PUBLIC IS ALSO VERY DISTURBED BY THE SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING THE PEACEKEEPING FORCE. THEY ARE PARTICULARLY CONCERNED OVER THE RUSH WITH WHICH IT WAS ADOPTED. MAARIV COMPLAINED THAT "WASHINGTON LOST NO TIME IN SUBMITTING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL ITS PROPOSALS; THE US DID NOT WAIT FOR BEGIN'S ARRIVAL AND REJECTED ISRAEL'S REQUEST TO HOLD UP THE PROPOSAL." MOST ISRAELIS AGREED
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THAT THE CONCEPT OF A UN FORCE WAS "A DANGEROUS ILLUSION."

7. IN LIGHT OF RECENT EVENTS, BEGIN'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON IS CONSIDERED CRITICAL. MANY ISRAELIS BELIEVE THAT THE VISIT HAS GOTTEN OFF TO A BAD START BY WASHINGTON'S NOT WAITING FOR THE PRIME MINISTER TO ARRIVE BEFORE PRESSING THE UN RESOLUTION. YEDIOT EDITORIALIZED THAT "IT LOOKS AS IF BEGIN HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE MATTER (SOUTH LEBANON). ALL HE HAS TO DO IS TO RECEIVE ORDERS. THIS IS A DOUBLE INSULT."

8. NEVERTHELESS, BEGIN, AS WELL AS THE US AND THE UN, IS BECOMING A TARGET OF CRITICISM. HIS GOVERNMENT IS BEING CHARGED BY SOME WITH IMPROVISING, BEING UNREALISTIC AND LACKING POLITICAL FOLLOW-THROUGH SUBSEQUENT TO THE MILITARY OPERATIONS. THIS HAS PLACED BEGIN IN A POLITICAL BIND, ACCORDING TO OUR EMBASSY. UNLESS HE CAN COME BACK WITH AN AGREEMENT WHICH WILL GIVE TEETH TO THE UN FORCE, BEGIN WILL BE SEEN AS HAVING SQUANDERED THE POLITICAL FRUITS OF A MILITARY SUCCESS. IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, HE INSISTS ON GUARANTEES PRIOR TO AN IDF PULLBACK AND IN SO DOING PRECIPITATES A CONFRONTATION WITH THE US, HE MAY BE ABLE TO HOLD PUBLIC OPINION FOR A WHILE BUT ULTIMATELY WOULD FACE THE CHARGE OF HAVING FURTHER ERODED THE US CONNECTION. THE ROOM FOR A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME IS VERY NARROW.

9. IRAQ IS THE FIRST ARAB COUNTRY TO SEND MILITARY AID TO THE PALESTINIANS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON, AND AID FROM OTHERS IS EXPECTED SHORTLY. PRESS REPORTS INDICATE THAT 31 IRAQI TRUCKS, WITH PERHAPS 15 SYRIAN ESCORT VEHICLES, TRANSITED SYRIA ON THE NIGHT OF MARCH 19/20 AND WERE SEEN IN THE LEBANESE PORT OF SIDON YESTERDAY.

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10. IN A CONVERSATION LATE SUNDAY WITH AMBASSADOR PARKER, LEBANESE PRIME MINISTER AL-HUSS, NORMALLY PHLEGMATIC, MADE AN IMPASSIONED PLEA FOR THE US TO GET THE ISRAELIS OUT OF LEBANON. HE GAVE A HARROWING PICTURE OF THE PROBLEMS CAUSED BY THE FLIGHT NORTHWARD OF 150,000 PALESTINIAN AND LEBANESE REFUGEES. HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS UNABLE TO COPE WITH THEM AND THAT BEIRUT SEEMED ON THE VERGE OF ANARCHY. HE ARGUED THAT THESE REFUGEES HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE TERRORIST RAID IN ISRAEL WHICH PROMPTED THE ISRAELI INVASION. THE RESPONSIBILITY WAS ISRAEL'S, SINCE THE SOUTH LEBANON SITUATION HAD REMAINED UNSTABLE BECAUSE ISRAEL EARLIER HAD NOT ACQUIESCED IN AN ADF PRESENCE OR OTHER SOLUTION.

11. THERE WERE DISTURBANCES AND STRIKES IN SEVERAL WEST BANK CITIES AGAIN YESTERDAY FOR THE FOURTH CONSECUTIVE DAY. SO FAR, ACCORDING TO OUR JERUSALEM CONSULATE, DEMONSTRATIONS HAVE RESULTED IN TWO ACCIDENTAL DEATHS, NUMEROUS INJURIES, AND WIDESPREAD ARRESTS, ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN NO SERIOUS PROLONGED DISRUPTIONS. THUS FAR, THE ISRAELIS HAVE AVOIDED LETHAL FORCE AND THE ESCALATION WHICH USUALLY FOLLOW IT, ACCORDING TO CONSULATE COMMENTARY. (CONFIDENTIAL) VANCE

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